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VIOLILLA

BY

WILDIE THAYER



COVER DESIGNED BY H. W. BROWN

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VIOLILLA.

In a green and pleasant valley
Where the flowers are ever blooming,
Where the sunbeams love to linger
And the birds to sing their carols ;
Where the purity and beauty
Seem akin to God and heaven —
Seem to say, “Here virtue reigneth
And all evil is excluded” —
In this green and pleasant valley,
In this quiet, earthly Eden,
Lived a pure and lovely maiden,
Lived the childlike Violilla.
Beautiful was Violilla,
Beautiful beyond description.
In her childhood Violilla
Had no playmates, no companions ;
All alone she roamed the forests,
Talked alone with birds and squirrels,
Read for books but God and nature.

Sweeter than the flower's fragrance
Was the breath of Violilla ;
Brighter than the golden sunbeams
Was the smile of Violilla ;
More enchanting than birds' carols
Was the voice of Violilla ;
Purer than the air of heaven
Was the soul of Violilla.

In a large and crowded city,
Where the dust is ever flying ;
Where the noise, the din and clamor,
Seem to say, "Confusion reigneth,
Peacefulness is here forbidden " ;
Where the moonlight is unnoticed —
Where the beauties of sweet nature
Are unknown and all unheeded ;
In this large and crowded city
Lived the gallant Herbert Trevor.
He was known as "handsome Herbert."
Nowhere in this wealthy city
Was a man more highly honored ;

Moved he in the highest circles ;
Many ladies smiled upon him.
One there was who pleased young Herbert
Pleased him far above all others ;
She was known as Isabella.
Radiant was Isabella,
Dark and passionate in beauty ;
Those who won her heart's affection
Knew a friendship everlasting.
And this lady, Isabella,
Was the one young Herbert favored
And he won her love in answer.

It was summer. In the city
All the air seemed close and stifling ;
Crowds were rushing to the country,
Where the air was fresh and healthful .
Isabella and her lover
Were among the crowds that journeyed.
When at last their journey ended,
Isabella smiled with pleasure
As she saw the beauty round her ;

For their summer place of resting
Was a green and pleasant valley
Where the flowers were ever blooming,
Where the sunbeams loved to linger ;
'Twas the quiet, peaceful Eden,
'Twas the home of Violilla.

To the castle in the valley
Where the lady Isabella
And her lover spent the summer
Came one day a fortune-teller ;
Thus addressed the guests assembled :
“ In my hands a box I carry,
In the box there is a powder ;
To the air I throw the powder ;
Instantly a mist arises
And the powder forms a picture
Mystical yet clear and perfect.
From the pictures one may gather
Of his future fate and fortune.””
Then addressed she handsome Herbert :
“ Cross my poor old hand with silver

While I show to you your future.”
Herbert laughingly obeyed her ;
To the air she threw the powder ;
Gradually there was forming
In the air a mist, and gathering
In the powder-cloud before him
Was a picture, clear and perfect.
It was of a lovely fairy ;
She was tripping, lightly tripping
On a precipice the brink of.
He was trying to o’ertake her,
Warn her of her awful danger ;
Saw not that his situation
Was as perilous as hers, or
That behind him came a lady,
Came a dark, a radiant lady.
Soon this lady hurried past him,
Seized the fairy by the shoulders,
Cast her on the stones below her,
Laughing only at her groaning.
Quickly then the vision faded.
Once more spoke the fortune-teller,
“ Cross again my hand with silver,

I will show you yet another."

Then there rose from clouds of beauty

Such a quiet, peaceful picture—

Herbert, standing at an altar,

Was about to wed the fairy.

Slowly then this vision faded;

Suddenly appeared another:

On the gallows he saw hanging

Her who hurled the tiny fairy

From her place of fearful danger.

Herbert trembled as he saw it.

Still appeared another picture—

He was lying in a forest,

Weak and bleeding, slowly dying.

When at last this vision faded,

Lo, the fortune-teller vanished!

"Tell me now," said Isabella,

"Of the views she spread before you."

Herbert told her of the pictures

Which his eyes alone had witnessed.

"Tell me, Herbert, tell me truly,

Did you ever see the lady,

See the one you saw suspended

On the gallows in your vision ?
If so, tell me what her name is.””
Hesitating, Herbert answered,
“ It was you, you, Isabella.””
Whispered Isabella, earnest,
“ Should you ever see the fairy,
See the fairy of your vision,
And should dare to learn to love her,
If she stole from me your heart’s love,
I believe that I would kill her—
Hurl her to the world below us ! ””
“ Hush, my darling,” Herbert whispered,
“ I am true to you as life is ;
You are true to me as life is ;
Nothing in this world shall part us,
Only death can separate us.””

It was evening. In the valley
Sweet and holy was the stillness ;
Brightly shone the stars and planets ;
Perfect was the silver moonlight.
Handsome Herbert, nature-loving,

In the house was not contented.
He must stroll out in the moonlight,
See the valley by the moonlight.
Suddenly he stopped in wonder ;
Surely heard he some one singing.
Then he laughed . “An idle fancy,
It was but a bird,” he muttered,
“ But a bird that I heard singing.”
Once again the voice rose clearly,
More enchanting than birds’ carols ;
Herbert quickly looked around him,
Looked around to find the singer.
Boundless was his admiration ;
“ Surely,” said he, “ birds could never
Sing with such amazing sweetness.”
Then he saw her, saw the singer.
'Neath a huge tree she was standing
Gazing at the stars above her,
Singing to the stillness round her.
Herbert gazed, gazed bound in wonder
At the beauty of the picture.
Slowly he approached the singer.
Suddenly she stopped her singing

As she saw him coming toward her.
Handsome Herbert bowed before her,
Saying, "Tell me, beauteous maiden,
Who you are, and what your name is.
Never have I heard such singing,
Never have I seen such beauty!"
Glorious violet eyes were lifted
Fearlessly to meet the stranger's;
Answered then the lovely maiden,
Tossing back her curls of sunshine
With a laugh as light as childhood,
"Sir, my name is Violilla."
With a smile she turned and left him,
Vanished quickly as a vision.

To her home went Violilla,
Tripping lightly through the flowers,
Thinking of the handsome stranger;
Thinking thus was Violilla:
"No one e'er has praised my beauty,
No one e'er has praised my singing,
No one but this handsome stranger."

Turning quickly Violilla
Saw a figure standing near her.
By the almost-daylight moonlight
Violilla saw the features
(And she trembled as she saw them)
Of the strange old fortune-teller.
“ Fear me not,” a low voice murmured,
“ Maiden, lovely maiden, hear me ;
I have left my forest cabin,
Come to give you words of warning ;
I have watched you e’en from childhood ;
You are now in fearful danger.
Listen not to love’s soft whisper,
Shun this handsome, low-voiced stranger ;
Maiden, heed my words of warning.”
Violilla would have answered,
But the creature strange had vanished.
To her home went Violilla,
Not a word she told her parents
Of the stranger who had praised her,
Not a word she told her parents
Of the strange old fortune-teller ;
’Twas a weird, delightful secret,

And she harbored it with pleasure.
Daily she grew silent, dreamy,
And her mother greatly wondered
What had changed her darling's manner.
And one day she asked her, saying,
“What has changed you, Violilla,
That you are so absent-minded?”
From her seat sprang Violilla,
Threw her arms around her mother,
Pressed a kiss upon her forehead,
Quickly then ran from the cottage
For a ramble through the forests;
Left her mother standing puzzled,
Puzzled at her wayward action,
Saying, “What has changed my darling?
What has changed my Violilla?”

Back again went handsome Herbert
To the castle in the valley,
Thinking of the singing fairy.
Daily he grew silent, dreamy;
Distant seemed to Isabella.

Everywhere he saw the features
And fair form of Violilla ;
Ever near him was her presence.
Thus he in his mind decided :
“ I will love this Violilla,
I will teach the child to love me,
But will keep the matter secret ;
Isabella must not know it.”
Thus it was that he decided.

O the brightness of that summer !
O the darkness of that summer,
Of that summer in the valley !
With his whispered words of sweetness
Herbert wooed sweet Violilla.
And the fairy, lovely maiden,
Dainty, childlike Violilla,
Yielded all her sweet affection,
Yielded all her heart’s devotion
To the care of handsome Herbert.
And one bright, one moonlight evening,
In the stillness of the valley,

Violilla gave her pure life
To the care of handsome Herbert.
“ Violilla,” Herbert whispered,
“ We must keep our marriage secret.”
Violilla, wondering, answered,
“ As you bid me, I obey you,
Yet I wonder at your reasons,
At your reasons for concealment.”
Gently chided handsome Herbert,
“ As you love me, trust me fully.”
Softly whispered Violilla,
“ Know my lips are sealed with silence.”

Isabella’s servant told her
That as she was idly roaming
In the stillness of the evening
She had seen her master Herbert
Strolling slowly in the moonlight
With a maiden of the valley.
All that long night Isabella
Paced her room in raging anger,
Wroth that Herbert should deceive her—

Dare to ramble with another
In the beauty of the moonlight.
She had wondered at his manner,
At his absent-minded manner ;
Now she understood it plainly,
He was thinking of another.
Clearly now she saw the reason
Of his frequent evening rambles,
Of his rambles in the moonlight ;
He was roaming with another,
With a maiden of the valley.
Flashed her eyes with sudden fire,
Flamed her cheeks with vivid crimson ;
All her proud and jealous nature
Rose to help her vent her fury,
Vent her fury on the lover
Who had dared thus to despise her ;
Vent her fury on the maiden
Who had dared to learn to love him ;
And she cursed the childish beauty
Of the gentle Violilla,
While the evening's shadowy curtains
Fell in beauty o'er the valley.

Gradually handsome Herbert
Wearied of sweet Violilla ;
Slowly Herbert learned the lesson
Which, once learned, will ever linger.
Cupid oft the fancy visits,
Yet but once the heart he blesses.
He had fancied Violilla,
He had never loved her truly,
But his love for Isabella
Was a deep and mighty current.
When he thought of Isabella,
Queenly, radiant Isabella,
All his soul to her responded.
Isabella, proudly jealous,
Accused Herbert of deception.
“ Listen to me, Herbert Trevor,
As you are my promised husband,
As my life is promised to you,
I command you ne'er again to
Meet this maiden of the valley.””
Herbert answered, slightly smiling,
“ Willingly I will obey you ;
Grant me pardon, Isabella.””

Then the gracious Isabella
Granted pardon to her lover,
Saying, "I forgive you, Herbert;
I again will love and trust you,
And forget you ever met this
Simple maiden of the valley."

Violilla wondered greatly
What had changed her husband's manner;
Seldom now she saw her husband.
In the silence of her chamber
She would weep in bitter sorrow.

One day Herbert wrote a missive,
Wrote a note to Violilla:
"Do not fail to meet me early
'Neath the old tree at the corner,
Meet me, darling, in the evening."

Violilla met the servant
At the gateway of the cottage,
Took the tiny note he gave her,
Pressed her loving lips upon it.

Well she knew who sent the missive
Though no name was signed upon it.
“ Surely, surely I will meet you,
Will not fail to meet you early.”

It was evening. Peals of thunder
Jarred the stillness of the valley.
Peals of thunder, lightning flashes,
Mingled with the rain descending;
O the darkness of that evening!
Isabella, pale and frightened,
Locked herself within her chamber.
“ Surely,” murmured handsome Herbert,
“ Violilla will not venture
Out this wild and stormy evening;
’Twould be folly to expect her;
I’ll not venture in the tempest.”
Ah, he little knew the faithful,
Loving heart of Violilla.

Timidly stood Violilla
At the window of her chamber,
Peering out into the darkness,

Murmuring low, "I must not fail him,
Should he be there, he must find me
Waiting for him, watching for him."
Noiselessly she left her chamber,
Softly she the stairs descended,
Tremblingly the door she opened,
Secretly she left the cottage.

"Ah, 'tis a delightful tempest," . . .
Said the weird old fortune-teller.
"Very cheerful is the darkness !
How melodious the thunder !
Charmingly the wind is howling !
I cannot resist the calling
Of the elements of nature,
I must go and join the chorus.
Hark, I hear the trembling accents
Of the lovely Violilla ;
I must hasten, I must save her,
Though I send a fiend to claim her,
I must take her from his presence
Ere her gentle heart is broken."

At the tree stood Violilla
Waiting for her husband's coming.
Fiercely fell the rain upon her,
Terrible the darkness round her.
O the rumble of the thunder !
How she trembled as she listened !
On the ground fell Violilla,
Shivering in her frightened weakness.
Hark ! She hears some one approaching ;
Now she rises, stands, and listens.
See, a vivid flash of lightning
Seems to split the very heavens !
For an instant in the darkness
Gleams a dagger, then, O horror !
Violilla falls unconscious.

Morning came, the sun shone brightly,
Still more lovely was the valley
For the rain which had descended.
Careless nature, ever thoughtless,
Smiled in all her radiant beauty ;
Did not mourn for Violilla.

Soon the news spread 'round the valley
That the dainty Violilla,
Who was loved by all who knew her,
Had upon that stormy evening
Disappeared from every presence.
Not a living trace remaining,
Nothing by which one could trace her,
Only this—a gleaming dagger
'Neath an old tree in the valley,
And upon the ground a ribbon
Which was worn by Violilla.
Could it be that she was murdered?
Much the people wondered, asking
Who the crime could have committed,
Everyone loved Violilla!
Handsome Herbert heard the tidings
And he bowed his head in sorrow,
For he knew that Violilla
Faithfully had come to meet him.
Then a thought exultant, cruel —
He was free, his bonds were broken,
Now he could wed Isabella,
Stately, queenly Isabella.

Quickly then a dark suspicion
Flashed across his mind an instant,
“ Could it be that Isabella
Took the life of Violilla? ”

In a log hut in the forest,
On the border of the valley,
Lived the strange old fortune-teller,
With her was a dainty lady,
Was a lady pale and fragile.
On one dark and stormy evening
She had found her weak and bleeding,
Found her lying 'neath an old tree,
Weak and bleeding, almost dying,
And had brought her here to nurse her,
In this old hut in the forest ;
It is she, our Violilla—
Changed indeed, ah, sadly altered.
No one ever sees her smiling,
No one ever hears her singing.
Saddened is her heart within her,
For she thinks her husband Herbert

Had that evening tried to kill her.
Oft she whispers low and earnest,
“He shall never know I’m living.”
Spake she to the fortune-teller,
“ You have taken me and brought me
Back to life, but had you left me
I had perished in the tempest.
Why, O why did you not leave me ?
Death is sweeter far than life is.
But you saved me ; now I beg you
Let me stay with you forever.
Do not tell the world I’m living,
Let me stay here in concealment.”
Answered then the fortune-teller,
“ You are safe, my pretty lady,
Stay with me and be as I am—
Dead to all the world though living.”

Great excitement filled the city,
Crowded was the city court-house,
For the belle, the renowned beauty,
Betrothed wife of Herbert Trevor,

Was this day to have her trial,
Have her trial for the murder
Of a little country maiden.
Silent sat the lovely prisoner
As the witnesses were summoned
And she heard their testimonies.
Witnessed one, an aged pastor,
That one bright and moonlight evening
He had joined in matrimony
The fair, lovely, murdered maiden
To the lover of the prisoner.
Quickly then proud Isabella
Raised her veil and looked at Herbert,
Flashed one angry glance upon him.
Herbert felt that glance of anger,
Yet he did not look upon her.
All the testimony given
Was against proud Isabella.
On the evening of the murder
No one saw her at the castle,
But a small lad testified that
On the evening of the tempest
He had seen a dark-haired woman

Roaming wildly round the valley.
Other witnesses were summoned—
Violilla's loving parents ;
And the gallant, handsome Herbert ;
Then the servant of the prisoner.
But their simple, truthful stories
Only strengthened the appearance
Of the guilt of Isabella.
Then the prisoner was called for.
“ Guilty, or not ? ” came the question.
Then rose stately Isabella,
Looked upon the crowd of faces,
Fearlessly she looked upon them,
Proudly, bravely then she answered,
“ As high heaven is above me,
As a true God reigneth o'er me,
I did not commit this murder ;
Of this crime I am not guilty ! ”
Sudden silence filled the courthouse.
Slowly then withdrew the jury.

“ Silence,” said the judge, “ and listen.
You have heard the prisoner's story,

You have heard the testimony,
And the jury have decided
That the prisoner is guilty.
Sentenced to a year in prison,
Then to hang upon the gallows
By the neck, till life is ended.”

Isabella bowed in silence,
Then was led to serve her sentence
In a dark and gloomy prison.

Handsome Herbert heard the verdict,
Heard the judge pronounce the sentence,
And saw queenly Isabella
Led in silence to the prison.

Then he knew not what possessed him,
But some unknown spirit led him.
Suddenly his horse he mounted,
Hastily dashed from the city,
Knew not whither he was going ;
Cared not whither he was going,
Till at last, thrown from his saddle,
He was lying ’neath an old tree,
Weak and bleeding, almost dying ;
But he saw between the branches,

Nestling in the lonely forest,
An old hut, a log hut standing.
Barely could he move for weakness,
“ Yet,” he murmured, “ I will try to
Make my way into this cabin ;
It may be some kind soul lives there
Who will guide me from this forest.
What strange spirit led me hither ? ”

On a bed lay handsome Herbert
In a stupor, half-unconscious.
Did his wife, his Violilla,
Stand beside him, gazing at him,
With her large blue eyes so loving ?
Did she stoop and gently kiss him ?
Was it real, or was he dreaming ?
“ Violilla, are you living ? ”
“ Yes, my husband, I am living.
On that dark night when I met you,
Though you came and tried to kill me,
Yet I live, I am here living.
No, I will not e’er reproach you,

Willingly I would die for you ;
Always shall I be, for your sake,
Dead to all the world though living.””
Handsome Herbert answered firmly,
“As I live, and as God liveth,
Never did I try to kill you.
O believe me, Violilla !””

All alone sat Isabella
In a dark and gloomy prison.
Mocking seemed the peeping sunbeams,
Fiendish gleamed the twinkling starlight,
And in agony she whispered,
“Am I mad, or am I dreaming ?
O for death to give me freedom.””
Hark, the prison door is opened,
And a figure slowly enters,
It approaches Isabella.
Is it real, or but a spirit ?
Gliding, spirit-like, it nears her.
“ Fear not, lady Isabella,
Know that I am Violilla ;

That I am not dead, but living.
I have come to give you freedom,
And to prove that you are guiltless.”
“God be praised,” said Isabella.
Then with head bowed low, she murmured,
“Though I live, my heart is broken.”
Violilla caught the murmur,
Sadly whispered she in answer,
“Sorrow not, for Herbert loves you.”
Like a spirit then she vanished.

Quickly spread the welcome tidings
Through the city, through the nation,
That the maiden Violilla
Was not murdered, but was living;
That the lady Isabella
Now was free and was not guilty.

In the costly, stately mansion,
In the home of handsome Herbert,
Sadness reigned and gloom was present,

For the lovely Violilla
In this mansion now was dying.
Ah, it was a weary journey
From the forest to the city !
Yet complained she not, nor murmured.
To her bleeding heart she whispered,
“Ah, he loves her, Herbert loves her ;
Love like mine cannot be blinded.
I will save her though I perish.”
Earthly life was now beneath her,
Glorious death stood hovering o'er her.
By her side sat handsome Herbert,
Weeping as he looked upon her.
Faintly then said Violilla,
“Herbert, husband, I am dying ;
Soon I'll bid farewell to sadness ;
Grieve not, Herbert, that I leave you,
When the heart breaks, heaven is welcome,
Think of me in heaven, Herbert,
Waiting for you, watching for you.
Do not, do not fail to meet me.”
Then the dying Violilla
Whispered low to Isabella,

“ Earth was meaningless without him,
Heaven itself will be more glorious
That I here have learned to love him;
Yet, my lady, Violilla
Would not knowingly have wronged you.
Listen to me, queenly lady,
Listen to me and forgive him;
Herbert cares for Isabella
As he ne’er loved Violilla.
Then forgive him, O forgive him,
Let your heart speak its affection.”
Isabella, lowly bending,
Kissed the brow of Violilla;
“ Not in vain your life, sweet angel;
You have shown us pure affection,
Sweet, unselfish heart’s devotion.”
Thus she murmured low and tender
While a smile of heavenly beauty
Glorified the lovely features
Of the dying Violilla.
“ I am happy now,” she whispered,
Then she closed her eyes in slumber,
Slumber not to be awakened.

Isabella whispered gently
To the anguished handsome Herbert,
“Herbert, freely I forgive you ;
'Tis the wish of Violilla.”
Nearer bent her head and whispered,
“Nothing in this world shall part us,
Only death can separate us.”

Violilla's loving parents
Mourned in anguish for their darling ;
Soon they pined away in sorrow ;
Side by side in peace they slumber
In the churchyard in the valley.

t is whispered in the valley
By the superstitious maidens,
That if one should dare to wander,
Dare to roam the shadowy forests
In the beauty of the moonlight,
At the lonely hour of midnight,
He would hear the sweetest music—
Weird, angelic, clear, entrancing.

'Tis the voice of Violilla.
Should he listen, listen fearless,
He would see a vision standing
Like a lily in the moonlight.
Violilla's spirit wanders
Lovingly around the valley.

Still within that quiet valley
Are the flowers ever blooming,
Still the sunbeams love to linger
And the birds to sing their carols.
And the mothers in that valley
Warningly repeat this story
To their daughters in the moonlight.
Thus they whisper to their children :
“ Bid deception flee far from you.
When within your heart it nestles,
Perfect purity must vanish,
E'en as Violilla's presence
Left this green and pleasant valley.
Yet the dream of Violilla,
Of the purity of heaven,

Hovers round the heart forever,
Like a magic power restraining
Every evil thought and action.
Heed this influence of pureness,
It will keep you safe in Eden.
Heed this tale of Violilla—
Give no lover secret hearing ;
Let your love shine in the sunlight.”



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